

Scrutiny Panel 2 CULTURE AND TOURISM

Responses – Rachael Boyd, Director Delapré Abbey

1. Please can you make suggestions for the Scrutiny Panel's consideration how Northampton's heritage and culture could be promoted on a regional, national and global level?
 - Identifying Northampton's USP, celebrate what's great but be pragmatic about the barriers to visiting; what's stopping more people from visiting Northampton from across the County and beyond?
 - Broaden the appeal by looking at Northampton within a countywide context
 - Looking at Northampton heritage and cultural assets and linking them as package/s.
 - Identify lead institutions – Royal and Derngate for arts and cultural programming; Delapré Abbey for heritage attractions and ask those institutions to work with other heritage and cultural partners across the town
 - Combined marketing campaigns – not just another website or leaflet!
 - 1 big thing per season which could be an event or a single message and then focus attention on this rather than diluting the message with a myriad of smaller events and activities. Get the buy in of your lead institutions (Royal and Derngate/ Delapré/ Museum joint overarching theme with season's worth of programming
 - Aspire; find commercial partners and sponsors and even national cultural institutions who will elevate the town into a place with a national/ international pull.

2. Can you identify any gaps within this marketing and the cultural and tourism offer and how it can be developed? Please provide details
 - There isn't a brand Northampton that I recognise and can readily tap into. What is the offer? Who are we appealing to? I'd recommend a focused effort to develop a new identity which unites all that's compelling, interesting and different about Northampton and celebrates its rich and often unrecognised heritage. We should identify the hidden gems as well as the cultural leaders, such as the Royal & Derngate, and those cultural leads can support the hidden gems with combined programming and marketing.
 - Town centre destination plan and signage – this is the single biggest practical issue facing an attraction such as Delapré Abbey. I would expect to see a considered town centre destination traffic centre management strategy with brown signage from the motorway and major A roads onto which we can simply add the final entrance/ exit signs for the Abbey. However, there's currently no infrastructure or coherent destination plan.
 - All the cultural and tourism attractions in the town and environs would benefit from a combined leisure and tourism strategy which picks up destination planning but also marketing and PR. There'd also be economies of scale on offer from joint advertising booking, collective promotions and discounts with the major rail networks (think about Chiltern Railways successful tie up with Bicester Village).

- Really understanding and going after the London & UK inbound travel market –joint stands at the group visit shows which promote Northampton to the inbound tourist market; developing Northampton/shire group bookings packages specifically appealing to market segments such as the Asian traveller, US traveller for whom Northampton’s rich history is new and fresh. We have to set ourselves apart because we’re competing with the Cotswolds!

3. How could the vehicle of tourism be used to provide learning about Northampton

No comment

4. Please provide details of the roles of both Northampton Borough Council and other partners have in promoting the town of Northampton

NBC’s role should primarily be one of facilitation by setting up the infrastructure and landscape; working with attractions and partners to identify and promote the vision for the town; making connections with other towns and partners (working much more closely with the County Council and finding strategic relationships further afield with Bedford, Kettering, Milton Keynes etc.,) and setting the right funding and legislative landscape for the tourist sector generally to thrive.

5. What do you want the cultural and heritage offer of Northampton to look like in 2025?

Northampton has the potential to be a vibrant and creative destination attraction. 2025 could see the town centre flourishing with a focus on craft and artisan makers; innovative shopping and retail experiences that sit around and within our cultural and heritage attractions (museum shop, Delapré Abbey stable yard). The Town could have gained a reputation for food and drink again led by local chefs, growers and producers. This local, artisan approach will lead a new wave of visitors to the town centre supported by a close attention to key infrastructure, parking and the visual appeal of the townscape. There’ll be a linked tourism plan with incentives for instance for Delapré Abbey visitors to go on and enjoy the museum, 78 Derngate or a night out at the Royal & Derngate. There’ll be combined programming; clever and thoughtful joint marketing campaigns; group bookings packages which appeal to national and international visitors and a genuine reason for people to come to Northampton to see what the whole town has to offer.

Rachael Boyd

Director, Delapré Abbey

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